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SUBJECT: ZUMA'S CABINET IS BRILLIANT POLITICALLY, BUT WILL  
IT BE EFFECTIVE?

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Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR RAYMOND L. BROWN FOR REASONS 1.4 (B)  
AND (D).

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Summary  
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¶1. (C) Newly elected President Jacob Zuma's Cabinet is settling in following the swearing in ceremony on May 11. Most political analysts and pundits have praised Zuma's selections -- lauding some for their managerial skills, some for their willingness to bring new ideas to government, and some for their political power within the ruling tripartite alliance. Although the Cabinet choices reflect a wide range of experiences and political alignments, it remains to be seen whether some new ministerial teams -- notably in education and home affairs -- will be effective in addressing the country's biggest societal issues. End Summary.

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ANC, Zuma Makes Their Moves  
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¶2. (C) President Zuma announced his Cabinet selections last month following lengthy consultations with the African National Congress (ANC). Zuma's discussions with the ANC over Cabinet composition and size suggest that the new President is being true to his word that he will rely on as many players as possible when making decisions. (Note: Some would argue that he was too true to his word, as Zuma arrived at the press conference to announce the Cabinet thirty minutes late. His delay was reportedly because of last minute infighting within the ANC and the tripartite alliance -- composed of the ANC, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the trade union federation COSATU) -- over Cabinet choices. End Note.) The ANC and Zuma ensured that the Cabinet is balanced between those generally seen as populist and those generally described as pro-business. Moreover, the party and Zuma made sure to accommodate some officials often seen as close to former President Thabo Mbeki such as Charles Ngakula and Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. However, this cabinet is very pro-Zuma, made up of some of his closest political supporters and members of the alliance. The message that Zuma reportedly sought to send is that there will be general continuance of macro-policy structures (albeit with some changes to the ministries' composition) with some changes to micro-policy formulation and implementation.

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Choices Draw Praise, But Questions Remain  
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13. (SBU) Reactions to Zuma's Cabinet selections have been largely positive. Alec Russell, author of "South Africa After Mandela," noted that investors would breathe a sigh of relief and "say it looks like he intends to keep macro-economic policies on the same track." He stated, "It says, 'I'm not a scary populist who's going to send policy sharply to the left.' It says, 'I listen to business and I'm aware of their concerns.'" Political analyst William Gumede noted that "he got it right on the economic cluster of ministries." He further said, "It does say clearly that he wants to get the economy right. That's where his priorities are." University of Pretoria political scientist Roland Henwood noted that the Cabinet selections were generally outstanding. However, he related that even though Zuma's choices were brilliant politically, there are serious questions about how effective the ministers will be at delivery. He quipped, "(Basic Education Minister) Angie Motshekga and (Correctional Services Minister) Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula are disastrous at delivering quick results. Also, I have serious questions about whether (International Relations Minister) Maite Nkoana-Mashabane is up to the task of leading a professional foreign policy." There are questions about how effective Zuma's appointments would be in addressing social issues. Gumede noted that while the appointments are impressive in balancing party factions, they are less impressive in terms of improving delivery. He stated, "People see the Home Affairs ministry as absolute incompetence (at home) and abroad as well (sic). It's just a lax department. Everything from passports to travel documents, everything needs to be fixed. One would have expected someone more inspiring (than Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma). We didn't get that." (Note: It is

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noteworthy that one of Minister Dlamini-Zuma's first statements about her new ministry was to clearly admit that it was riddled with corruption that allowed its travel, identity and other documents to be produced illegally. End Note.)

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Cabinet Picks Highlight Key Trends

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14. (C) While some questions remain over whether the new Cabinet can deliver, Zuma's selections demonstrate a number of important trends worth watching during the next five years. Each of the trends below will have implications both for the 2011 municipal election and the 2012 ruling party congress:

-- The presidency will be larger, more powerful, and will have more formal advisers in the President's office than there were under Mbeki. This will be a key development as businessmen, diplomats, and statesmen seek to win access to work with the Zuma government. In addition to Collins Chabane and Trevor Manuel, Zuma will look to former Minister of Defense Nqakula on political matters, Mandisi Mpahlwa on economic affairs, Lindiwe Zulu on international affairs, Ayanda Dlodlo on affairs related to Parliament, and Bonisiwe Makhene on legal issues. Under the Mbeki and Motlanthe administrations, Nqakula served both as Minister of Safety and Security and Minister of Defense. Mpahlwa served as Minister of Trade and Industry and Deputy Minister of Finance in previous administrations. Zulu, a member of the ANC's National Executive Committee, served as South African Ambassador to Brazil until December 2008. Dlodlo is also a member of the ANC's National Executive Committee and is the Secretary General of the Military Affairs Association; she has close ties to Lindiwe Sisulu. Makhene is currently deputy chief state law adviser in the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, but will be seconded to the Presidency later this month. According to informal Zuma

adviser Mo Shaik, the informal advisers were selected as concessions to "keep them quiet." The only person Shaik considers close to Zuma is Zulu on international affairs.

-- Not only will there be more formal presidential advisers, there also will be more ministers. The ANC expanded the Cabinet from 28 to 34 ministries. This will be an important trend to watch because it could create a bureaucracy larger than anything that South Africa has seen since 1994. Some political commentators, including Roland Henwood, claim that Zuma has "Africanized the Cabinet." The argument goes that Zuma increased the size of the Cabinet to accommodate his allies, but in doing so has created what could be a potentially unwieldy policy process similar to what has happened in other African countries.

-- The ANC wants to retain Limpopo Province's loyalty. This will be a key goal as the ruling party seeks to ward off opponents in the 2011 election and as the ANC prepares for its next party congress. Several of the senior players in Zuma's government hail from Limpopo, which is a strategically important province that helped sway ANC members to Zuma at the December 2007 ruling party congress. Limpopo also promises to be a key battleground province during the 2011 municipal elections. The Congress of the People has consistently said Limpopo is a province it can win and can consistently said Limpopo is a province it can win and can build the local structures necessary to govern at the municipal level. Cabinet players with connections to Limpopo include Chabane, Aaron Motsoaledi, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Richard Baloyi, Joe Phaahla, and Rejoice Mabhudafhasi.

-- Zuma, under the auspices of the ANC, wants some KwaZulu Natal allies kept close. This will be a key trend because there already are questions over some of Zuma's business deals in the past, many of which have dogged the President since the conviction of his former business associate Schabir Shaik. Zuma's Cabinet includes several leaders that he forged connections to during his time as a premier in KwaZulu Natal. The ministerial team includes Ebrahim Patel, Musa Nhlanhla Nene, Malusi Gigaba, Jeff Radebe, Nathi Mthethwa, Roy Padayachie, Siyabonga Cwele, Sbusiso Ndebele, and Noluthando Mayende-Sibiya.

-- The ANC is unafraid, at least for now, of competing centers of power. This is perhaps the most important trend,

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but the one that may change the most over time. The party will have ministers with strong personalities in the Cabinet, such as Minister of Planning in the Presidency Manuel and Minister of Home Affairs Dlamini-Zuma, along with strong leaders from Luthuli House such as ANC Secretary General Gwede Mantashe and ANC Treasurer Matthews Phosa. Although the ANC seems satisfied with this arrangement, such a dynamic is likely to be key in setting the stage for succession battles ahead of the ANC's 2012 ruling party congress. If power in Luthuli House outweighs power in government (as many political analysts predict), Mantashe, Phosa, or Baleka Mbete may hold the inside track over whether Zuma stays on as party leader or whether a new leader emerges ahead of the next election. Both the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) also seem unafraid of competing centers of power, but perhaps less satisfied with the arrangement than the ANC. Some of the most visible leaders from the tripartite alliance (Jeremy Cronin, Blade Nzimande, and Rob Davies) will be serving in the Cabinet, but COSATU Secretary General Zwelenzima Vavi has opted to remain outside the government. Similarly, SACP plans to hold leadership discussions about whether having Nzimande in the government will remain viable for the communist party over the longer term.

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Opportunities for Engagement  
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15. (C) The new team offers the United States new opportunities for continuing and future engagement. New Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi wants to continue work started by Barbara Hogan to address the country's ongoing battle against HIV/AIDS, according to most political analysts and leading South African commentators. The new ministry of Basic Education wants to improve the quality of South African primary education, and Zuma has said that he wants that body to establish a "Head Start" program similar to the one in place in the United States. Even though Motshekga is viewed as a weak choice for heading the ministry, deputy Enver Surty and Gauteng Minister in the Executive Committee Barbara Creecy are capable bureaucrats and have experience working with international partners to make progress on core policy goals. Also, the new Ministry of Police intends to address crime and, specifically, crime prevention ahead of the 2010 World Cup. Beyond these areas, there may be avenues for greater cooperation in public enterprises, transportation, and higher education.

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Comment  
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16. (C) Zuma and the ANC delivered a Cabinet that addresses the political balance of power between the party and the government. Political analysts say that Zuma's team has some solid managers who can bring new ideas to government while at the same time keep the tripartite alliance as close as it has been in years. Despite this optimism, however, there are serious questions about whether the new team can deliver better than the old one. In some areas, like Public Enterprises under Barbara Hogan and Water and Environmental Affairs under Patience Sonjica, there is reason for hope. In other areas, however, like Basic Education, Correctional Services, and Home Affairs, critics already are worried that little will change. Perhaps the single greatest determinant for how well the Zuma government functions -- and what happens in 2011, 2012, and beyond -- will be whether the Cabinet and the ANC can work together without one impeding or superseding the other.  
LA LIME